(c) whether such heavy imports of arms and weaponry are in consonance with the image of a country where close to 30 per cent of the population are under-nourished and nearly 50 per cent continue to be functionally illiterate?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The average outgo of funds including elements such as debt repayments, stage payments against contracts spanning several years, off-the-shelf purchases, technology transfer commitments and advance payments under contractual obligations are estimated to be approximately Rs. 5400 crores annually from financial years 1991-92 to 1997-98.

(b) According to available information, this docs not appear to be the case;

(c) India's defence expenditure, including defence imports, is one of the lowest in the region as per internationally accepted standards, such as per capita expenditure and defence expenditure to GDP ratio. This is despite India's considerable security requirements given its long coastline, extensive land borders and EEZ.

Import of Coal

*53. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that coal worth Rs. 4100 crores was imported last year when stocks of coal worth Rs. 3000 crores were lying at the pitheads in our country; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) During the year 1997-98, coal of value of Rs.4,422 crores was imported in to the country. As on 31.3.98, the value of vendable stock with the coal companies -CIL and SCCL) was R 1.397 25 crores,

(b) Bull OF imported coal is coking coal of actility in specification which is not produced in the country and is required by the Steel Sector. There has been import of Non-Coking coal also on the ground that imported coal is cheaper in certain locations compared to domestic coal.

Petrol pumps on National Highways in Bihar

*54. SHRI JAGDAMBI MANDAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of petrol pumps functioning on all the National Highways in Bihar;

(b) the criteria for opening petrol pumps on the National Highways in the country;

(c) whether Government have assessed the feasibility of opening more petrol pumps on National Highways in the state of Bihar; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY): (a) There are 339 retail fuel pumps on all the National Highways in Bihar.

(b) The following volume distance norms are adopted by the Oil Industry for opening retails outlets on National Highways:

(i) The combined thruput per retail outlet within 15 KM (on either side) of the -proposed retail outlet should exceed 80 Kilo Litres'(KL) per month.

(ii) The minimum expected sale during the second year of operation should be:

(a) In the case of—50 KL per Lone HSD month.

(b) In the case of—MS-5 KL per Combined MS/ month HSD HSD-50 KL per month.